

Central MRS Meeting Notes
January 28, 2008
Randolph County DSS

Counties Present: Guilford, Mecklenburg, Moore, Randolph, Stokes, Vance

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Evaluation: Duke – Fact Sheets, Data Entry, Updates

CPS/WF Collaboration Issues

Further Discussion of the System of Care - Partnering with families and children

Favorite Things Accomplishments, Tricks, Tip-n-Tools, Practice, Wishes for 08
Blueprint Feedback

News from Raleigh

- New supervisor for the Performance Management – Dawn Cambridge who came to us from Juvenile Justice.
- WF Institute - April 29, 30, May 1, invitations have already gone out, so if your county has not responded with the number of people you are sending, please do so when you get back to your county.
- MRS Institute – mid August. In mid-February there will be a call for presentations. Hope to have community folks there and expand to 600 people. This means we will have 14 presentations at the same time, so we will need more presentations. If you have an idea, please send it in when the call goes out. (18-20th of August at the Koury Center).
- Announcement was made at the Western meeting regarding the Division's current campaign to help county DSS agencies recruit and retain foster parents. Information gathering, the first phase of this campaign is already underway. Counties have been asked to complete a web-based survey that asks for some demographics and inquires about the agency's perception of its needs in this area. Participation in this survey, which closes Feb 4, is important because the information it provides will help determine the content and emphasis of the next phase of the campaign, which will be a series of foster parent recruitment and retention clinics to be conducted in different parts of the state in late Spring 2008. The purpose of these clinics will be to share innovative and effective strategies and to encourage agencies to develop/refine plans for recruiting and retaining foster parents. The Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-CH School of Social Work, which is assisting the Division with this campaign will follow up with participating agencies at least quarterly during SFY 2008-09 to offer additional support and information. If agencies have questions about this campaign or want information about participating in the online survey they should contact the Jordan's Institute's John McMahon (johnmcmahon@mindspring.com, 828-670-5051) or Mellicent Blythe (mblythe@email.unc.edu 919-843-7382)/
- NC Coalition against Domestic Violence Conference (co-sponsored by the Division) May 21-22 – not sure where the location will be yet, but it will be in the Triangle area.

- Admin letter coming out in the next week or so regarding training. Counties wanted to make orientation around CFTs required for all supervisors and social workers, so it shall be!

Evaluation –

Fact Sheets – Nicole shared what was on the current sheet. Duke wants these to be evolving documents with information that will be useful to local counties, and not just state aggregate data. Things that people like about the current sheet, and want to keep, or things that may not be as useful, or items that are not on there that could be – please share any of these ideas with her. Keep in mind they are trying to keep the fact sheets relatively brief – no more than 4 pages – so adding too many things will require some decisions of what is the most important because some things may need to come off the sheet in order to add multiple new things. All 100 counties will get a fact sheets this year (last year was just the pilot 10.) Asked that folks think about what they want, and then let her know (left cards, or can get her information from Holly or Patrick) obviously may not be able to think of everything you might want right now.

- Think of things that you would want to know if you were going to present to your County Commissioners or your Board.
- All data from the fact sheets comes from the 5106 and 5104. If data is not being entered, then it is not being reported on the fact sheet.
 - For example, the Contributory Factors were not selected for a majority of the cases. Currently although policy requires you to enter one, the Central Registry system does not. Also, currently only the primary contributory factor is available in DW, but are in the process of testing for being able to look at multiple ones.
- Pilot 10 are compared to themselves. 2nd wave counties only compared to other 2nd wave counties, 3rd wave only compared to other 3rd wave counties. Rates of assessment (per 1,000 children) counties were grouped with each other within those groups of 2nd and 3rd wave counties so that similar counties could be compared with each other instead of comparing a Hyde county to a Wake county.
- Using 2005, 2006, and 2007 as years of data.
- Child Safety – looking at doing it on a fiscal year rather than a calendar year. Have gotten some feedback that counties would prefer it this way (and this group agreed).
- Percentage of children with 6 and 12 month reassessments. Looking at combining In Need of Services and Substantiations and then getting rid of the 12 month – just looking at within 6 months of receiving either one of the two findings did a family receive another finding (in other words, instead of separating substantiations and In Need of Services, looking at findings that result in a family receiving 215 services.)
- Frontloading – one of the previous findings of MRS evaluation was that an increase in frontloading minutes of services decreased the rate of repeat assessment. Wanted to know if counties though this was valuable because it is a large table and if there may be something counties would rather have on there.
- Reassessment rates by findings – what are the findings that are associated with repeat assessments – people were interested in this.
- Blended caseloads – is there interest in looking at seeing if counties that have blended caseload have shorter 215 or fewer entries into 109?
- Foster Care Data - do CFTs during foster care result in reunification in less time?

- Look at kids that come into Foster Care through Juvenile Justice versus from CPS.
- Contributory Factors – this information can be useful when advocating for programs or funding. For example if 95% of your substantiations include DV, then you have a powerful tool for advocating for a program in your area.
 - However if you don't enter the stuff, it won't be in there! We recognize that the CFs have some limitations as they are on the 5104. Some of the CFs require a documented opinion from a medical professional The Division has set up a meeting to talk about the CFs. The Central Registry does not require you to put a CFs when keying in the system, but there is not always a CF that is a good fit with the issues in the case, so we are working on it, but it is not as easy as just making it required. In the meantime, if there is clearly a CF that is applicable, please indicate it on your 5104.
 - Would like state sanctioned queries regarding the items on the fact sheet so they would not come as a surprise.
- If folks want good information on their fact sheets they must completed the 5106.
- Currently the fact sheet comes out once a year – we could do twice a year if counties would find it useful.

Other issues

Abandonment

- One county asked if other counties were seeing an increase in abandonment issues. They are having a lot of parents who just drop their children off with DSS or with someone they know and take off.
- Consider that often the school system will say that the children are abandoned because the school considers it abandonment if there is not a parent or legal guardian with the child, and we at DSS do not consider all of those abandonment – some of these are a plan that the parent has made (may not be the best plan, but it is a plan).

Kids that come into care through Juvenile Court

- In Guilford they are trying to address the issue with a program called GAPS. There are 3 social workers who are always in juvenile court when it is in session. Have met with judges to talk about those issues and how to address them. Mental Health and Juvenile Justice are also at those meetings. The judges have agreed that prior to placing a child in DSS custody they will allow a team decision meeting to discuss options for the child.
 - If a child is at high risk of coming into custody or going to training school, those social workers are responsible for case management and they work in concert with Juvenile Justice workers.
- Holly has heard from other counties as well that they have met with the judges and had good success with the judges giving the DSS a week or so 'heads up' and they can try to develop a plan with the family before the child comes into custody. Sometimes they have had great success with the family once they know that if they don't participate in a plan the judge will take custody of the child and they won't be have as much voice then.

Blended Caseloads

- Question was asked if it was mandatory to keep the worker the same from the assessment to case management. Holly said, although it was best practice, it was not

required. She also reiterated that if you are going to try this, you have to commit to it for at least a year so that workers can get over the learning curve of providing the new service. Is helpful to pair with a co-worker who used to do the other one so that you have a buddy system with a former 210 worker and a former 215 worker so they can support each other.

- Randolph would like to know how you stay focused on the in-home services cases because they feel that the assessment/investigative cases will always take priority. One worker has 17 assessments and 4 in home services. This is too many. (These are moderate, their assessors don't keep high risk.) Betty in Guilford said you have to keep the caseload lower.
- In this situation it is not the blended caseloads that are not working, it is the high number of cases that is not working. Look at what you are accepting as a case, are these all legitimate cases? Also look at the cases you are sending to 215 – are these all really cases that you would take to court or are you just trying to help the family “a little more”, and finally be sure that you are closing out 215 cases when appropriate and not holding on.

CPS/WF Collaboration Issues

- At a meeting for the WF Institute they want to really work on the collaboration between WF and CPS. The WF side feels that they have a handle on what causes the frustration on the WF side, but they are interested to find out what causes the frustration on the CPS side, and if people have found ways to overcome those barriers. They may like to have these as cracker barrel discussions.
 - If you think about any of these please share with Holly or your WF Rep or CPR so that they can pass them along.
- We will probably have a similar discussion at the MRS Institute.
- Thoughts here:
 - Income level is an issue –the families that come into CPS care have jobs therefore they are not eligible for money. These are federally set and we can't change them but there are other services that they can get if they meet 200% of poverty even if they don't get a check. There are a lot of services that the working poor can benefit from.
 - If they are getting child support families are discouraged from applying for services because they are told that makes their income too high.
 - Sounds like there may be a breakdown in communication so that people do not understand that if they make too much to get the check, that there are still a lot of services that they can still receive.

Further Discussion of the System of Care - Partnering with families and children

What are things you are doing? As you read records, how do you know that some things are being done differently??

- Sitting down with the family and saying to them “You are the expert on your situation, tell us what we need to do to help you?”
- CFTs will be a huge part of this. This is why we are looking more closely at them, making sure they are holding to model to fidelity, and making the training required.

- Holly heard from a family that had participated in CFTs – and the way the 15 year old son bought in to the meeting was that he got to choose where the meeting was, and he could invite someone he wanted that was there just for him (in this case it was a friend of his who was also a teenager). He also did not want the school there because he felt that they nagged him all day. Although the school needed to be there because they were a large part of the issue, they went with Matthew's wishes and did not allow the school to be there at the beginning. When Matthew realized that the meetings were working to allow his family understand him better, he came to the realization himself that maybe the schools would understand him better to, so he started inviting the teachers one and a time.
- What do you do at CFTs?
 - Offer options to families instead of telling them what they have to do.
 - Location is critical – the meeting can be almost anywhere, but if it is not at the DSS families immediately seem to be more invested.
 - Listen to the children and incorporate their ideas into the plan. Even if we are trying to keep a child from having to care for their parents, if there is something that they want to do for their parents that make them feel invested in the process, let them do that if it is reasonable.
 - Let the children get to their own goals (In the example above with Matthew if the SW has said "you need a B average" he would have turned out, but one of his goal involved starting his own business, which required a drivers license, and he needed the B average to get the drivers license. So he came to that goal himself.)
 - Respect – most of the families we work with do not have the lifestyle that we may have. They may be used to people talking down to them and tune people out that they can tell do not respect them. If we show a family that we truly respect them, they will be more responsive to us.
- What are things you see at other agencies?
 - The Army has a great response team. One social worker who recently worked with a military family noticed that when she got there the Army was already there with a plan and everyone involved had a part in the plan.
 - The military has started in involving families more with their Family Care Plan. All military personnel have to develop their own plan that covers what the plan for their children is if they were to be deployed within 24 hours notice.
- Think about how we can help community partners who may need some help in getting family members involved.

Favorite Things

Accomplishment that you are proud of

- Nicole got all the data from the focus groups coded and ready for analysis. (Went to 10 counties and had 3 meetings at each and everything that was said was recorded.)
- Stokes passed their bi-annual review and got their county board of directors to allocate money for a facilitator position. The Director sat in on a CFT and was very impressed.

- Guilford hired a 3rd facilitator. Have learned that they are a Casey Anchor to Anchor site and will continue to be an Anchor next year. Moving toward a facilitator facilitating all CFT meetings, not just the high risk. Reorganized last year and now all 3 zones are doing MRS the same way.
- Vance has a new supervisor who is from another county so she has brought in a fresh approach. Truly believes in CFTs.
- Mecklenburg – have a new facility opening that is centrally located – part of the outreach effort to get out to where the families are.
- Randolph – all units doing assessments now. Not totally blended teams, but they are making progress in that direction.
- Holly – MRS Institute. The planners had learned a lot from planning the previous one and felt really good about how it turned out this year.
- Holly is also proud that these meetings still take place and are productive. At the meeting she went to in Denver many folks said they had meetings like this when they were implementing, but they no longer have them. But we continue to get input by continuing to have them and getting good attendance.

Tricks, tips and tools – what do you do that you really like?

- Coaching - Holly just went to Coaching in the Kitchen training, and the coaching technique is a wonderful practice for anyone, from working with your case families, as well as your own family and anyone you interact with in a professional or personal arena.
- Recruitment and Retention project – New Hanover and Buncombe have found this to work very well. The video shows a realistic picture of social work and this helps screen people out that thought they wanted to do this, but may decide that they really don't. The structured interview is really good as well.
 - Buncombe has seen wonderful result for this. Their turnover was 28% or so, so far this year its 3%. Filling positions has gone from 40-60 days to about 7 days.
 - New Hanover had an applicant watch the video and decide that this was not for her. This is a lot better than having someone work for you for 6 months and take all the training and then decide it is not for them.
 - Question was asked would there be any incentives attached with this project. That would be a county decision supported by county funds. We have to advocate for ourselves.
- A facilitator went to see another facilitator do a meeting just to get some ideas. This other facilitator handed out a card and put the name they would like to be called on the front of the card. The back of the card had the agenda and other information. This was a great idea to this facilitator because she carries flip charts, agendas and a bunch of other stuff, and she thought the name tents with info on the back was neat.

Wishes for 2008

- No more new paperwork – think this discourages new workers because they are overwhelmed by all the paperwork that they have to do. However they are working on this as they have a new supervisor who is trying to go paperless and has workers working on a project to save time and paper.

- Other counties have tablet computers, voice recorders, etc. There is new technology that you write with a special pen on special paper and then you just upload it to your computer.
 - You may think technology is too expensive, but often if you can get one item in the door and show that it helps with the backlog and people are getting caught up and staying that way, then the powers that be may be more likely to invest in more. This is how Beaufort got their tablet computers.
- A visitation resource location.
- Holly's wish is that we get enough funding for 600 people at the MRS Institute.
- Also that she will continue to hear great stories about how we are moving ahead with MRS. Loves to hear the "ah-ha!" moments.
- Randolph wishes for a more collaborative relationship with community partners; law enforcement, juvenile justice, the court system. Used to have a great relationship, but with turnover some of that has degraded. Are establishing a Task Force to deal with Sex Abuse and Abuse cases. First meeting this Friday.
 - Holly made the suggestion that they include the providers who provide treatment.
- Never stop talking to people in your community about what you do and what we need!!

Blueprint Feedback

- Holly goes back to Denver at the end of the month to meet.
- It was interesting to try and talk about what was best practice and not have everyone come at it from the particular model that they were most used to.
- Decided to develop a continuum because there was never going to be one model because no one wanted to sacrifice the particulars of their model.
- Holly put out the draft document and if people have feedback please share it with her (preferably in writing) so that she can share with the group.

February meetings:

Central: Winston Salem - South Side Library, February 27th

Western: Asheville - St. John's Church, February 19th

East: Pitt County - Agricultural Extension, February 28th

March meetings:

Central: Rowan County - Library March 26th

Western: Asheville - AB Tech, March 27th

East: Lenoir County Agricultural Extension, March 18th